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Apostles- Thomas

Luke 6:12-16

Luke 6:12-16, *Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.¹³ And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:¹⁴ Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew;¹⁵ Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot;¹⁶ Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.*

Group One:

1. Simon called Peter,
2. Andrew,
3. James,
4. John.

Peter, James, and John's names get mixed around in the list, Peter's is always first, but they are always in group one.

Group Two:

1. Philip,
2. Bartholomew — or Nathanael,
3. Matthew,
4. Thomas.

Always group two in every list.

The names of Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas get mixed, but Philip is always the first name of group two.

Group Three:

1. James the son of Alphaeus,
2. Simon the Zealot,
3. Judas son of James,
4. Judas Iscariot.

Always the same in every list.

The names may be mixed a little bit, the two middle names, the names of Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James get mixed.

James the son of Alphaeus is always the first name in group four and Judas is always the last name of the twelve.

Thomas

Besides "Thomas," the Bible also calls him "Didymus," which means "twin." He is remembered today as "Doubting Thomas." Known for: Thomas is one of the original twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. He doubted the resurrection until the Lord appeared to Thomas and invited him to touch his wounds and see for himself.

Bible References:

In the synoptic Gospels (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15) Thomas appears only in the lists of the apostles, but in John's Gospel (John 11:16, 14:5, 20:24-28, 21:2), Thomas leaps to the forefront in two important narratives. He is also mentioned in Acts 1:13.

Occupation:

Thomas' occupation before he met Jesus is unknown. After Jesus' ascension, he became a Christian missionary.

Hometown:

Unknown

Family Tree:

Thomas has two names in the New Testament (Thomas, in Greek, and Didymus, in Aramaic, both meaning "twin"). We know, then, that Thomas had a twin, but the Bible does not give

the name of his twin, nor any other information about his family tree.

The opening words of the Gospel of Thomas are: "These are the hidden words that the living Jesus spoke. And Didymus Judas Thomas wrote them down." In the original Greek version, it is written: "Judas, who is also called Thomas."

Didymos is actually the Greek word for twin;

Thoma is the Semitic word for twin.

Thus, in the name "Didymus Judas Thomas" the only actual name is Judas. If the writer were identified as Judas Thomas, it would be like writing "Judas, the twin." The fact that Didymus also appears suggests that later readers were unfamiliar with the Semitic word thoma (meaning twin) and later editors added "didymus" to help readers.

1. Loyal

Most people do not know it, but Thomas was a loyal disciple of Christ who is willing to die for Him.

When Lazarus passed away, Jesus decided to go back to Judea. At this time, Jesus is already a wanted man and the Jews want to kill Him. Going to Judea was surely a suicide mission.

Thus, we read the response of the apostles.

John 11:8, *The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”*

However, Jesus Christ was determined to go back to Judea and perform one of the greatest miracles he would ever perform – bringing a dead person back to life.

John 11:14-15, *Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him.”*

Here is where the courage of Thomas manifested!

John 11:16, *Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”*

Some commentators believed that the “Him” in Thomas’ response refer to Lazarus, indicating that he is hopeless and just being sarcastic.

However, personally, I would say that the “Him” here refers to Christ. Thomas believed at this time that if Christ will die, it would be the end of it all.

Since he doubts that Christ will ever be resurrected, his mind is set to die with their Master once and for all. If they die, they die with Jesus.

While the statement of Thomas might be something that signals his lack of understanding and faith, it still shows his loyalty to Christ. He is more than willing to die for Jesus, and this has also been a motivation to other disciples who heard him.

Notice Thomas statement,
He did say, *"Let US go."*
He did not say, *"I will go."*

Thomas' desire is that other disciples would also do the same. He wants his fellow disciples to have the same frame of mind.

Thomas has answered Christ invitation, *"Follow Me."*

Thomas is ready to act upon that invitation to the point of death. He is ready to die with Christ and this desire comes from his strong affection to his Master.

As Christians, we need to make sure that we are also ready to die for Christ if the situation calls for it. Time will come when being a Christian would be difficult. In other parts of the world, Christians are already being killed because of their belief.

We are urged by the Apostle Paul.

Romans 12:1, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

When we decided to follow God, it means that we must also be ready to forsake everything, including our life.

2. Be a Leaner.

As Christians, we must recognize the need to learn and be taught by God. Sometimes, because of pride, we think that we know enough. When we think that way, we could not see the need to learn anymore.

As long as we live, there is no end to learning!

In fact, in my life, I could personally say that the more I study, the more I realize how little I know. A lifetime is not even enough to completely study God's word. There are just so many golden nuggets in the Word of God and it is up to us to find them.

The Apostle Thomas recognizes the need to learn further. Christ was teaching his disciples about a place He is preparing for them.

John 14:1-4, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

Thomas' response to this!

John 15:5, *Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"*

Christ's responded with most profound scripture of all time.

John 14:6-7, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."⁷ "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."*

Because of pride, we refuse to learn.

In this situation, though it is a sign of ignorance, Thomas nevertheless asked Christ for clarification of His earlier statement.

For us to learn, we must not be afraid to ask questions.

Like Thomas, it is better to be ignorant for a few minutes and ask questions rather than not ask a question at all and be ignorant forever!

Another important ingredient to learning is getting rid of our pre-conceived bias, prejudice, and ideas.

One of the main reasons that Thomas did not understand what Jesus was saying is that they have a pre-conceived notion that the Messiah will be reign during their lifetime.

They expected that the Messiah will be a conquering King who would deliver the Jewish nation from the clutches of the Roman Empire and restore its glorious days.

So, they did not understand why Christ will have to go far and prepare a place for them. For Thomas and the disciples, they are going to reign now and do not have to wait for a long time.

So, if you want to learn, be humble!

Do not be afraid to admit you do not know the answer.
Get rid of pre-conceived ideas and be open to new truths!

3. Be Honest

Now, we come to the story where Thomas was made more popular. It was the time when he first saw the resurrected Christ.

John 20:24-25, *Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*

We do not know the exact reason why Thomas was not part of the group when Jesus came.

Because of this, he doubted their report that they have seen Christ.

Thomas, he wanted more proof. He does not want to simply hear their report. If it is proof that he needs, then it is proof he will get.

John 20:26-28, *And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"*

The Bible told us to prove all things. However, Thomas, who has been with Jesus for more than three years should have already proven to himself that Christ will not remain in the grave but rather be resurrected on the third day!

Thomas, instead of believing, he doubted his fellow disciple as well as the words of Christ. He got the proof that he needed and thus, he believed.

Thomas was the first disciple on record to claim that the risen Jesus is God.

Nevertheless, Christ has this to say for our learning.

John 20:29, *Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

That is what we call faith.

Hebrews 11:1, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen".*

Faith is the EVIDENCE – the proof – of things that are not seen.

If Thomas could have been more faithful, he does not need the proof of seeing Christ personally. By the mere report of the other disciples, he should have already believed!

Thankfully, Thomas eventually grew in faith. After witnessing the irrefutable proof of Christ's resurrection and receiving the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, he became as courageous and zealous as the rest of the disciples. He became an instrumental leader in the church and has helped in spreading the Gospel.

As Christians today, it is true that to doubt is easier than to believe and have faith.

However, as long as we stay close to God, remember His promises, and follow His will in our lives, there is no reason for us to doubt.

The resurrection of Christ is the ultimate proof of what He says He is. He is truly the Son of the Living God and His sacrifice enabled us to receive the Holy Spirit and have the potential to be part of God's future Kingdom.

4. Be a Perceiver.

After Christ's death, it seems that all hope is gone. Many of the disciples and followers of Christ went back to their old occupation. They stopped doing the work of God.

However, after Jesus' resurrection and the confirmation that He is indeed the Messiah, many of His followers had a renewed zeal and dedication to do God's work. Among them is Thomas.

Acts 1:13-14, *And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

We read from this passage that Thomas did not stop following Christ. Along with other disciples, they all continued in prayer and supplication.

They have been preparing to do God's work and now, they are ready to perform the commission Christ gave them.

For us, Christians, we must not forget that the greatest work on the face of the planet is not our earthly jobs, but rather it is the preaching of the Gospel.

Like Christ, our daily spiritual bread should be doing the work of God. We must not let any day pass by without doing anything to preach the Gospel. It should be a top priority for us since by preaching the Gospel, we are also hastening the return of Christ.

5. Identity

A moment of weakness should not define us!

The life of the Apostle Thomas is just filled with a lot of lessons. He is truly a doubter who became a man of faith. Once he felt the wounds of Christ, all doubts and reservation of the Apostle Thomas quickly vanished.

He was quick to exclaim, *"My Lord and my God!"*

Now, it is true that most people remember Thomas as the doubting Thomas. We must also remember that this is the same Thomas who exclaimed, *"Let us also go, that we may die with Him."*

After saying those brave words, we could have also said, ***“Courageous Thomas.”***

However, the ***“Doubting Thomas”*** stuck more easily in the minds of many people.

Of course, let us not also forget that Thomas is among the disciples who deserted Christ during His darkest hour. The courage that Thomas once had were all erased by the thought of lashing, whipping, and torturing of Christ.

The best thing about all of these is that you do not have to let the moment of your weakness define your life. Like Thomas, he might have failed a lot of times during his time with Christ, but he certainly made great improvement after he has confirmed the resurrection of the Messiah.

Through God’s mercy and goodness, we are not consumed when we commit mistakes and sin. We can always turn to God, ask for His forgiveness, and change our ways.

Perhaps, you have made a great mistake today. But do not worry, you have a choice to stand on your feet, dust off the dirt, and continue your walk with God.

Thankfully, God does not take snapshots of our lives and base his judgment on those. Rather, he takes a motion picture, where he takes into consideration not just what we were, but also what we can become, from beginning to finish.

Thomas is just like most of us – weak, faithless, and pessimistic. However, with God’s help, Thomas transformed his life and become a great instrument in the hands of His Maker. In the same manner, no matter who you are, you can also make a positive change in your life and be like Thomas.

Missionary

The earliest mention of Thomas’ missionary work comes from Eusebius of Caesarea, who quotes Origen (a scholar who died in the mid-third century) as saying that Thomas was sent to Parthia (which is in modern day Iran).

But according to the more popular church tradition, Thomas travelled to India around 50 AD and evangelized the people there, possibly establishing as many as seven churches. This tradition appears to have begun with the Acts of Thomas, and it remains immensely popular in some churches—especially those claiming to have been established by him.

How did the Apostle Thomas die?

The Acts of Thomas says that he was martyred in Mylapore, India, where he was stabbed with spears. Syrian Christian tradition specifies Thomas was martyred in Mylapore on July 3, 72 AD, noting that he was killed with a spear. An early ecclesiastical calendar entry reads: “3 July, St. Thomas who was pierced with a lance in ‘India’.”

How about you? Do you have any lesson you want to share with us?